STAR WARS™

DOCTOR APHRA

MARVEL

029

SPURRIER
LAISO
ROSENBERG

RATED T

WORST AMONG EQUALS
Part IV

Doctor Aphra is on the run! Implanted with a proximity bomb, she's forced to stay close to her nemesis, Triple-Zero, or they will both face an explosive death. And only one specialist on Milvayne can safely remove the bombs before the timer runs out!

It's all part of a grand experiment by Doctor Cornelius Evazan, who watches their every move through a live feed broadcasting from Triple-Zero's eyes. And now Evazan has expanded the feed to transmit across every screen on the planet.

And Evazan isn't the only one who wants Aphra and Triple-Zero dead. A resurrected former Milvayne cop, Tam Posla, and Triple-Zero's old counterpart, the evil, reconstructed killer droid BeeTee-One, are after them, not to mention the hunters Winloss and Nokk. Allies are in short supply...especially after Aphra's newest friend, the young orphan Vulaada, betrayed them. . . .

SIMON SPURRIER
Writer

EMILIO LAISO
Art

RACHELLE ROSENBERG
Colors

VC's JOE CARAMAGNA
Letterer

ASHLEY WITTER
Cover Artist

KEVIN NOWLAN
Greatest Moments Variant Cover Artist

TOM GRONEMAN
Assistant Editor

MARK PANICCIA
Editor

C.B. CEBULSKI
Editor In Chief

JOE QUESADA
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DAN BUCKLEY
President

Very Special Thanks - KIERON GILLEN

For Lucasfilm:
Senior Editor ROBERT SIMPSON
Creative Director MICHAEL SIGLAIN
Lucasfilm Story Group JAMES WAUGH, LELAND CHEE, MATT MARTIN

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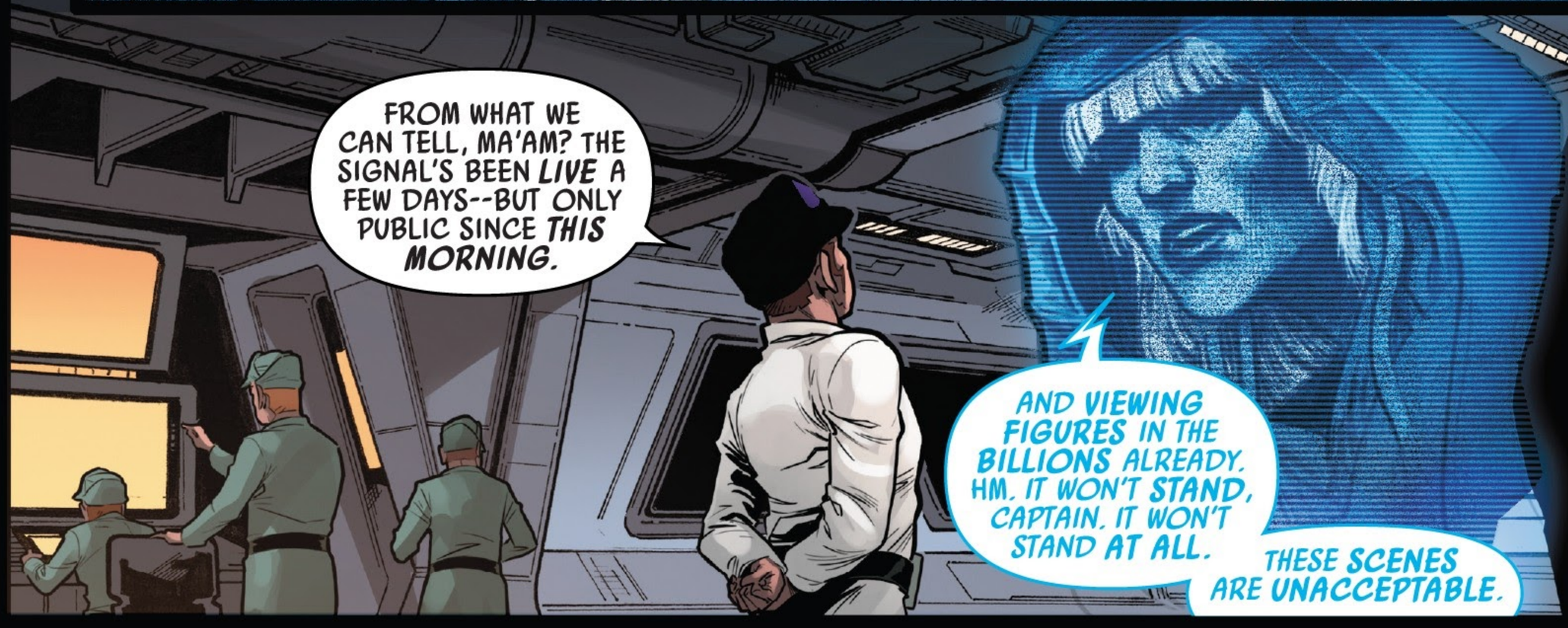
HOW LONG HAS THIS POISON FESTERED?


FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL, MA'AM? THE SIGNAL'S BEEN LIVE A FEW DAYS--BUT ONLY PUBLIC SINCE THIS MORNING.
AND VIEWING FIGURES IN THE BILLIONS ALREADY. HM. IT WON'T STAND, CAPTAIN. IT WON'T STAND AT ALL.
THESE SCENES ARE UNACCEPTABLE.

WE CANNOT ALLOW A PAIR OF RAGGEDY HOBOS TO INFECT THE LOCALS WITH MISCHIEVOUS IDEAS.
NO, MA'AM. IT'S JUST...
MILVAYNE ACCEPTED IMPERIAL RULE ON THE PROVISO WE MAINTAIN AN INVISIBLE PRESENCE! WE CAN'T INTERVENE!

CAN'T? CAN'T?! EXACTLY WHICH DIVISION DO YOU THINK YOU'RE IN, CAPTAIN?
ARE YOU SOME BRAINWASHED STORMTROOPER? ARE YOU SOME FECKLESS PILOT OR BELLIGERENT INSPECTOR?

NO, MA'AM.
NO, MA'AM! YOU ARE THE LASER-HOT EDGE OF THE EMPEROR'S DREAM! HOLD YOUR HEAD HIGH AND SPIT ON "CAN'T," CAPTAIN!
FOR WE--WE FEW! WE CUNNING! WE BOLD!--WE ARE THE COALITION FOR PROGRESS!
WE--

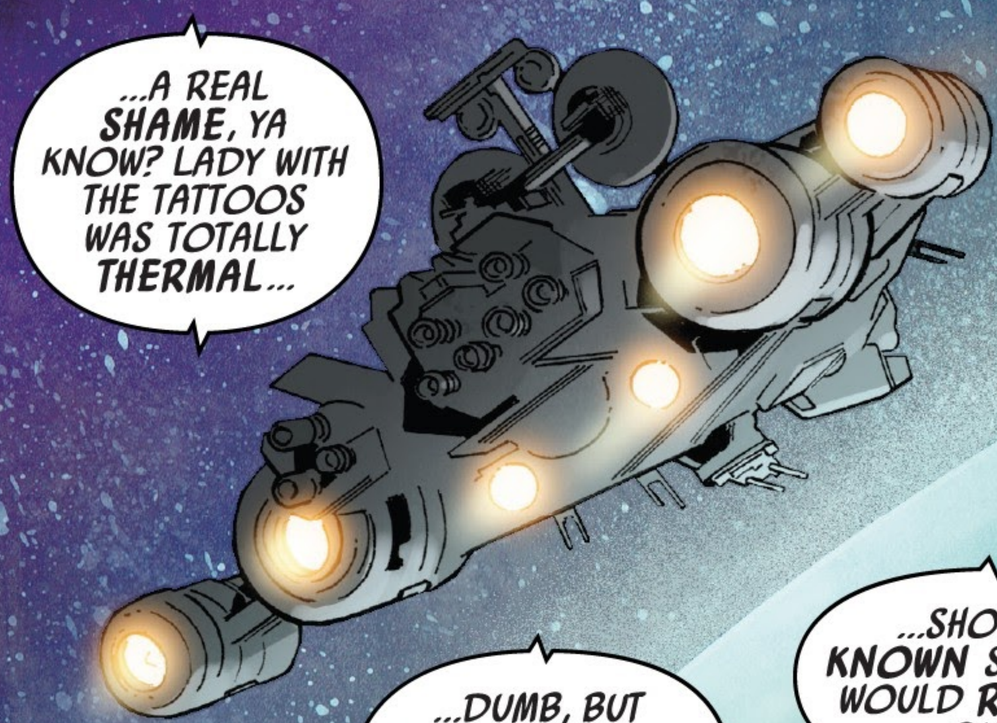
--ARE PUBLIC RELATIONS.
Imperial Propaganda Flagship
The *Enduring Pride.*
400 Klicks Above Milvayne.

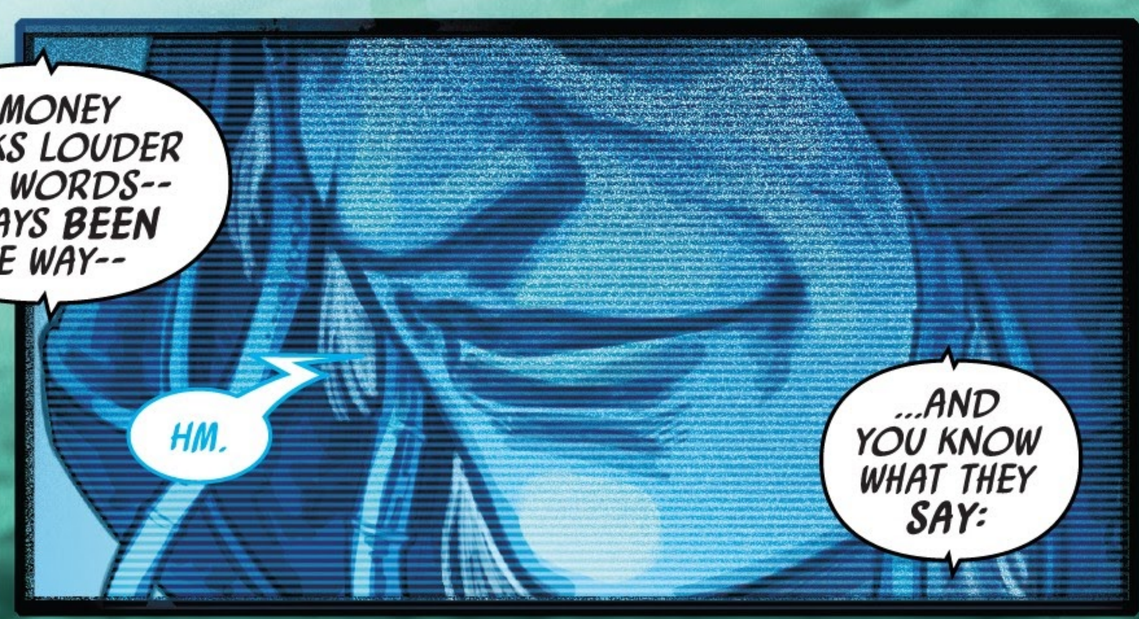
I ASSUME YOU'VE TRIED TO TRACE THE SIGNAL?
WE'D NEED TO CAPTURE THE DROID, MA'AM. THE VIEWERS WOULD KNOW.

HM. PUBLIC MOOD-- WHAT ARE OUR SPIES REPORTING?
INSURRECTION MARKERS AT GRADE 2, MA'AM.
A SLIGHT SPIKE. NOTHING LOCAL LAW CAN'T CONTAIN.

MA'AM? IT, UH. IT SEEMS THE WOMAN AND THE DROID HAVE BEEN CAPTURED. AN INFORMANT CAME FORWARD.
ON SCREEN.

PERHAPS THIS WILL RESOLVE ITSELF, MA'AM?
PERHAPS. ALTHOUGH ONE MUST ALWAYS BEWARE MARTYRDOM.
PULL UP THE AUDIO SCANNERS. LET'S HEAR WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING. RANDOM PATTERN.


...A REAL SHAME, YA KNOW? LADY WITH THE TATTOOS WAS TOTALLY THERMAL...
...DUMB, BUT I REALLY THOUGHT THOSE OUTLAWS MIGHT GET CLEAR...
...SHOULDA KNOWN SOMEONE WOULD RAT THEM OUT...

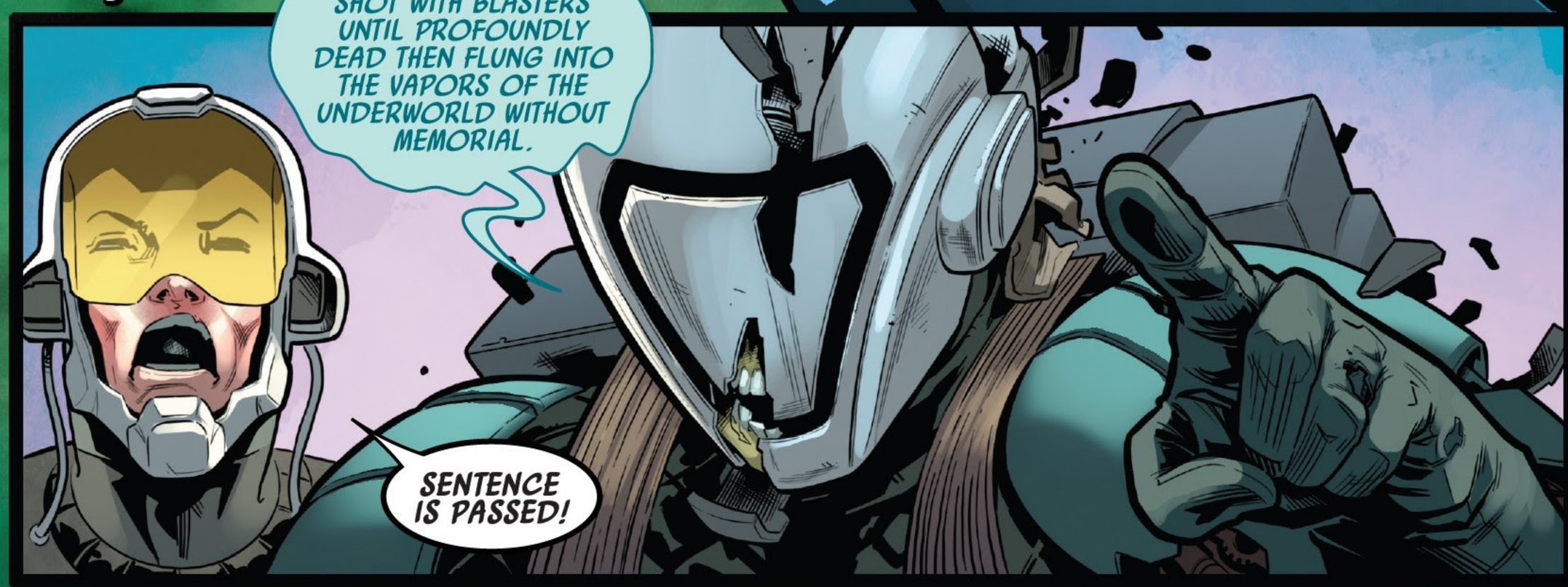

...MONEY SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS-- ALWAYS BEEN THE WAY--
HM.
...AND YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY:

"...IN THE EMPIRE, *LAW* COMES BEFORE *LOYALTY*."

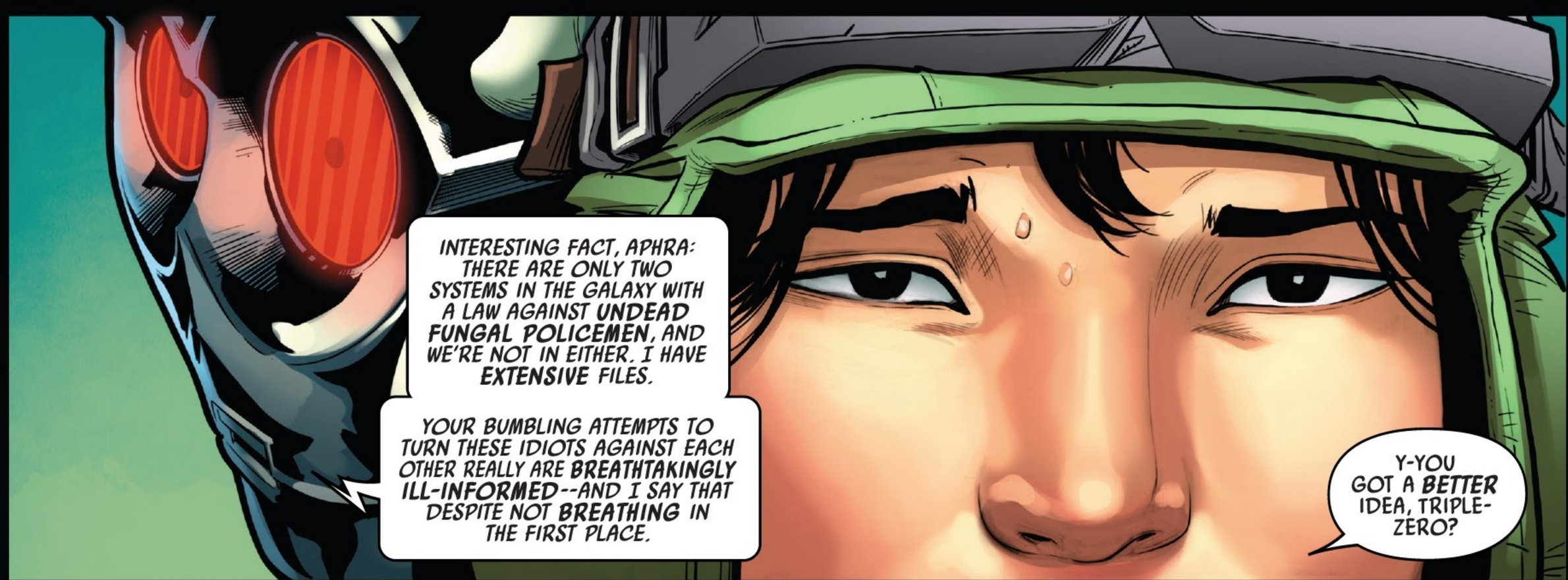
OBSCENE FELONS! YOU HAVE BEEN REPORTED FOR CRIMES TOO NUMEROUS AND NAUSEATING TO LIST!

DENUNCIATION IS GUILT! ARRESTING OFFICER *TAM POSLA* PRESIDING!

Milvayne City.



TAKE AIM!
WAIT! YOU CAN'T LET THAT PSYCHOPATH JUDGE US! HE'S INFECTED BY PSYCHIC MOLD! H-HE'S NOT EVEN PROPERLY ALIVE!


INTERESTING FACT, APHRA: THERE ARE ONLY TWO SYSTEMS IN THE GALAXY WITH A LAW AGAINST UNDEAD FUNGAL POLICEMEN, AND WE'RE NOT IN EITHER. I HAVE EXTENSIVE FILES.
YOUR BUMBLING ATTEMPTS TO TURN THESE IDIOTS AGAINST EACH OTHER REALLY ARE BREATHTAKINGLY ILL-INFORMED--AND I SAY THAT DESPITE NOT BREATHING IN THE FIRST PLACE.
Y-YOU GOT A BETTER IDEA, TRIPLE-ZERO?

OH DEAR ME, YES.
TAKE IT FROM ONE UNSURPASSED IN HIS ART, DOCTOR: WHAT PROFESSIONALS MOST FEAR IS BEING OUTDONE BY AMATEURS.

AND IN LAW ENFORCEMENT?
THERE'S A NAME FOR THAT.

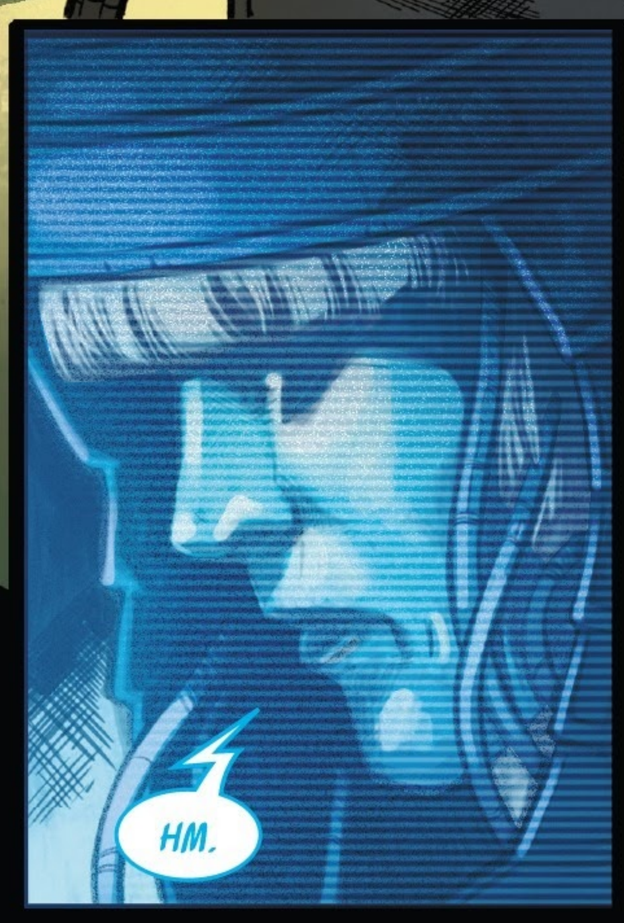
VIGILANTE!
HE WAS FIRED! HE WENT OFF-GRID! PURSUED A PERSONAL VENDETTA AGAINST ORDERS!
CHECK HIS WARRANT NUMBER IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME!
SHE'S RIGHT, SIR. DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE IN ABSENTIA.
A FOOLISH DETAIL! WE ALL SERVE JUSTICE!
PFT. SEE, GUYS? HE'S CRAZY. AS IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH JUSTICE, RIGHT?
REMEMBER THE CAMERAS, BOYS. THE WORLD IS WATCHING.
YOU REALLY WANT EVERYONE KNOWING YOU GOT OUTDONE BY A DESERTER?

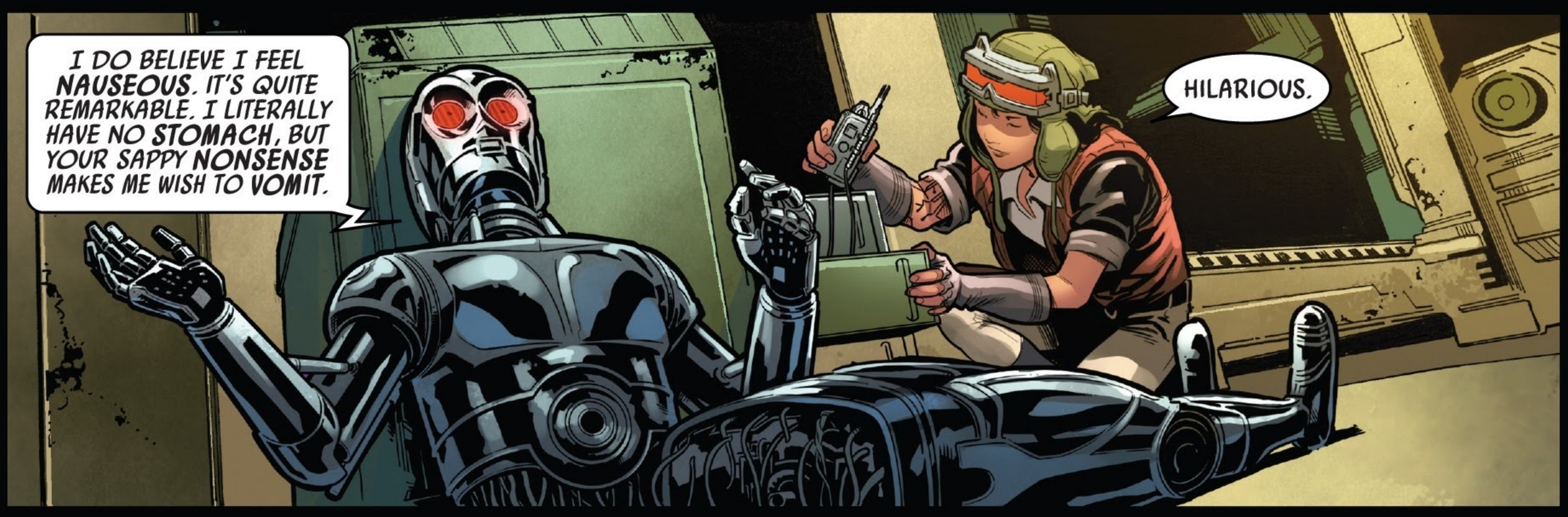
SHK
CHK-CHKK
KLK
FOOLS! THE FORCE IS JUSTICE AND JUSTICE IS THE FORCE.
I MUST CRUSH THE DARKNESS!
KILL IT.
PEW
PEW
PEW
WH-WH-WHAT SHOULD WE D--
TT. I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT DREARILY OBVIOUS, DOCTOR.

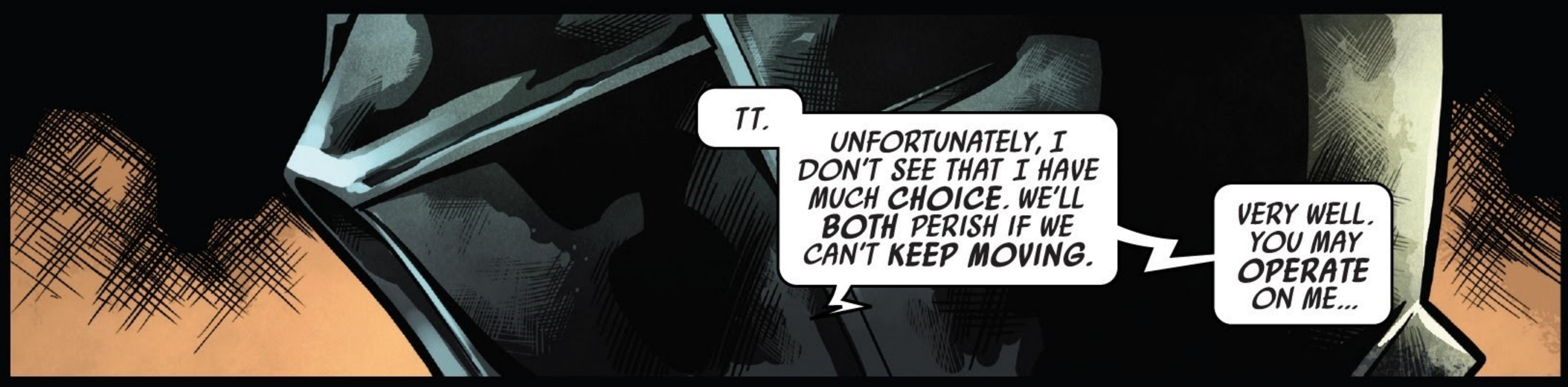
RUN, FLESHY STEED, RUN!
...JUST SAYING, DEAR--BETWEEN US?--IT'S NICE TO SEE THE HELMETS FIGHT EACH OTHER FOR A CHANGE...
...SHE'S GETTIN' AWAY! Y-YOU KEEP RUNNIN', HONEY! KEEP RUNNIN'!
WHOA! YOU SEE THAT ONE LAWGOON'S HEAD ASPLODE?
AWESOME!
HM.

HEEEF HHHUUUH!
YOU'RE-- HEEEF-- YOU'RE SO HEAVY!
THERE'S NO CALL FOR RUDENESS. IF ANYONE'S OUT OF SHAPE HERE IT'S YOU.
I'M NOT THE ONE SWEATING LIKE A HUTT AT A BUFFET.
L-LOOK.
THAT FUELSTOP HAS A REPAIR RIG. I COULD FIX YOUR LEGS, AND--
ABSOLUTELY NOT. YOU'D NEED TO DISENGAGE MY MATRIX FIRST.
IF YOU THINK FOR ONE MOMENT I'D TRUST YOU TO REACTIVATE ME AFTERWARD, YOU'RE--
WELL. YOU'RE PRECISELY AS MORONIC AS I THOUGHT.
TRIP...
LOOK-- I KNOW I'M--I KNOW I'M THE LAST PERSON YOU CAN RELY ON.
MAYBE THE LAST PERSON ANYONE CAN RELY ON.
BUT-- LOOK AT THIS WORLD. LOOK AT US. EVERYTHING'S TOXIC!
EVERYTHING'S FEAR AND MISERY AND--AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE NOBODY TRUSTS ANYONE.
I GUESS... I GUESS MAYBE WHAT I'M SAYING IS--WHEN YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY TREACHERY--

--A LITTLE *FAITH* IN EACH *OTHER* MIGHT BE THE STRONGEST FORCE THERE IS.







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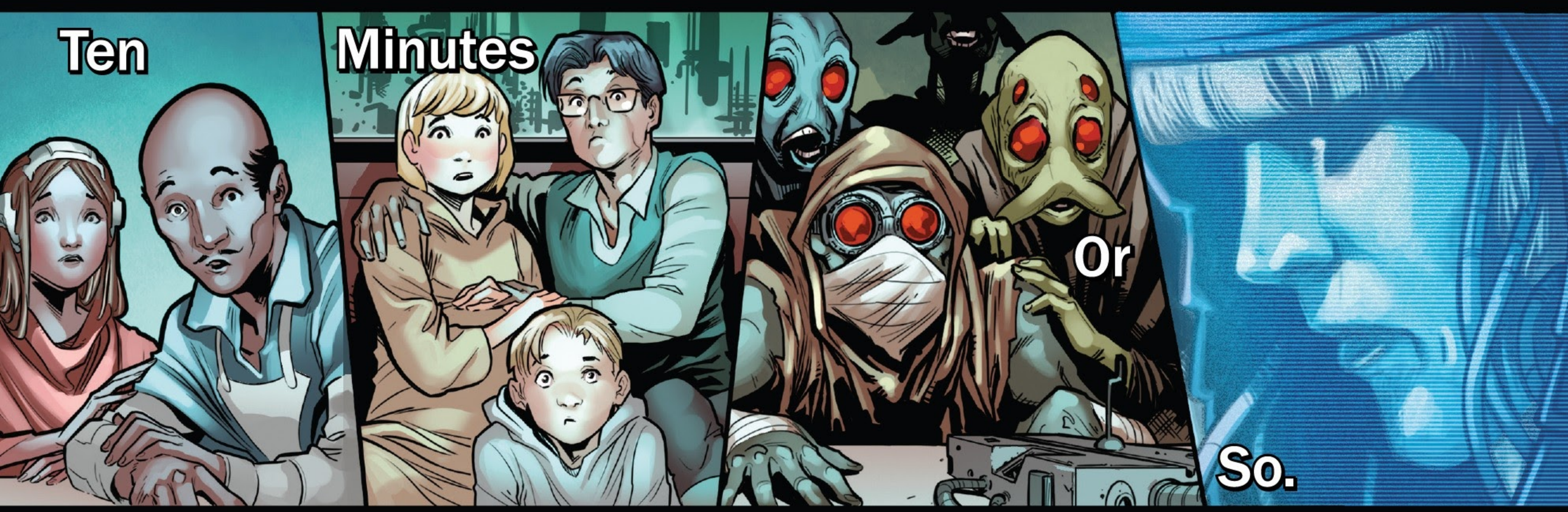
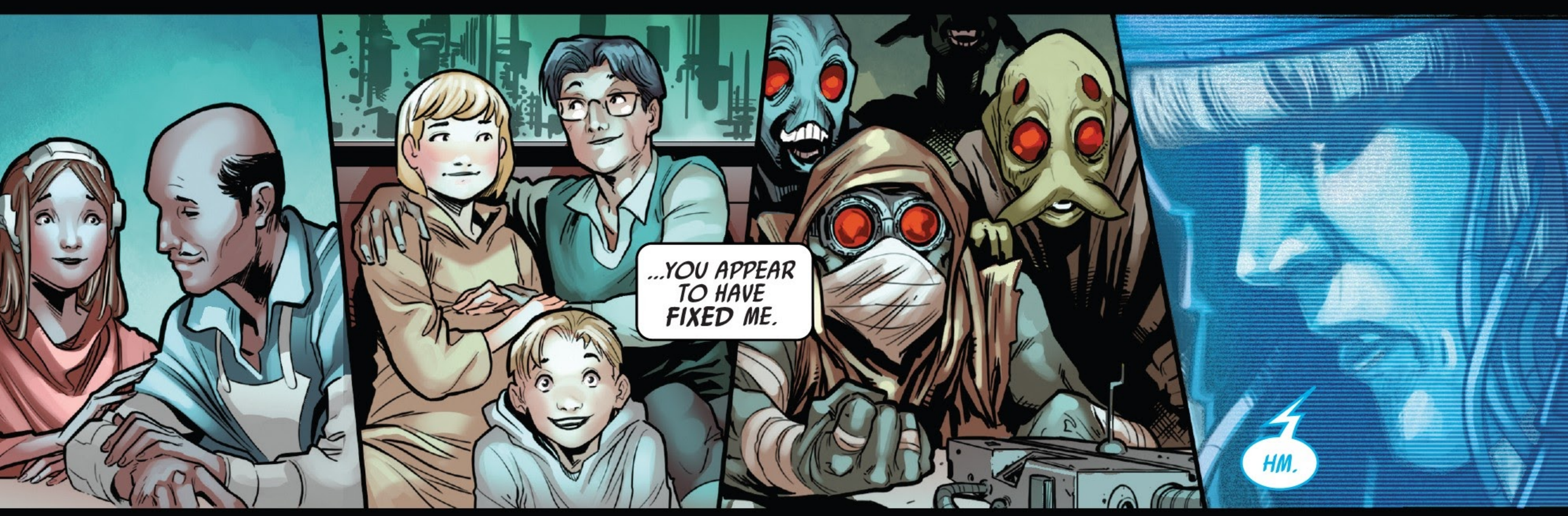
BUT KNOW THAT IF YOU TRY ANYTHING WHILE I'M ON STANDBY, I SHALL--
YEAH YEAH YEAH, UNBELIEVABLE AGONIES, YADA YADA. SERIOUSLY, TRIP, IT'LL ONLY TAKE TEN MINUTES OR SO. TRUST ME--

I'M A DOCTOR.
ZZZZP


Ten
Minutes
Or
So.

ZZZP
OKAY, YOU'RE BACK ONLINE. HOW DO YOU FEEL?

DIAGNOSTIC CHECKS IN PROGRESS:
WE HAVE FIVE HOURS AND TWENTY-TWO MINUTES BEFORE THESE BOMBS DETONATE. WE ARE SIXTY-SEVEN KLICKS FROM THE PREMISES OF PROFESSOR PREXO...AND...

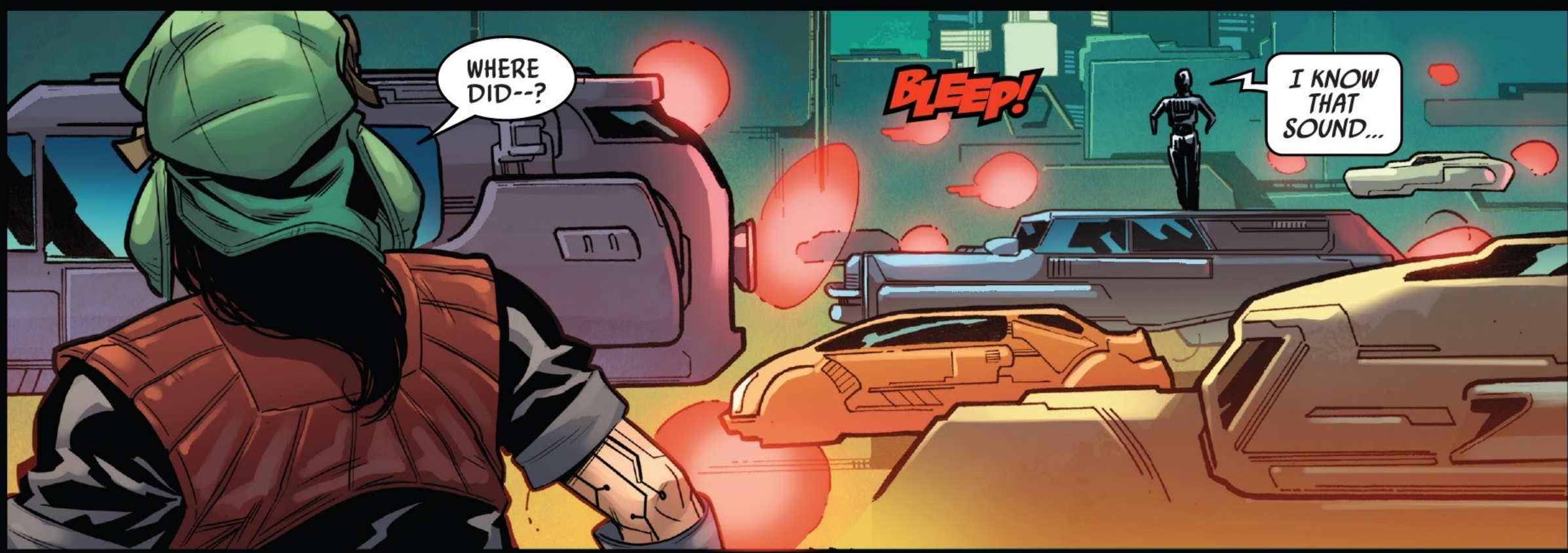

...YOU APPEAR TO HAVE FIXED ME.
HM.

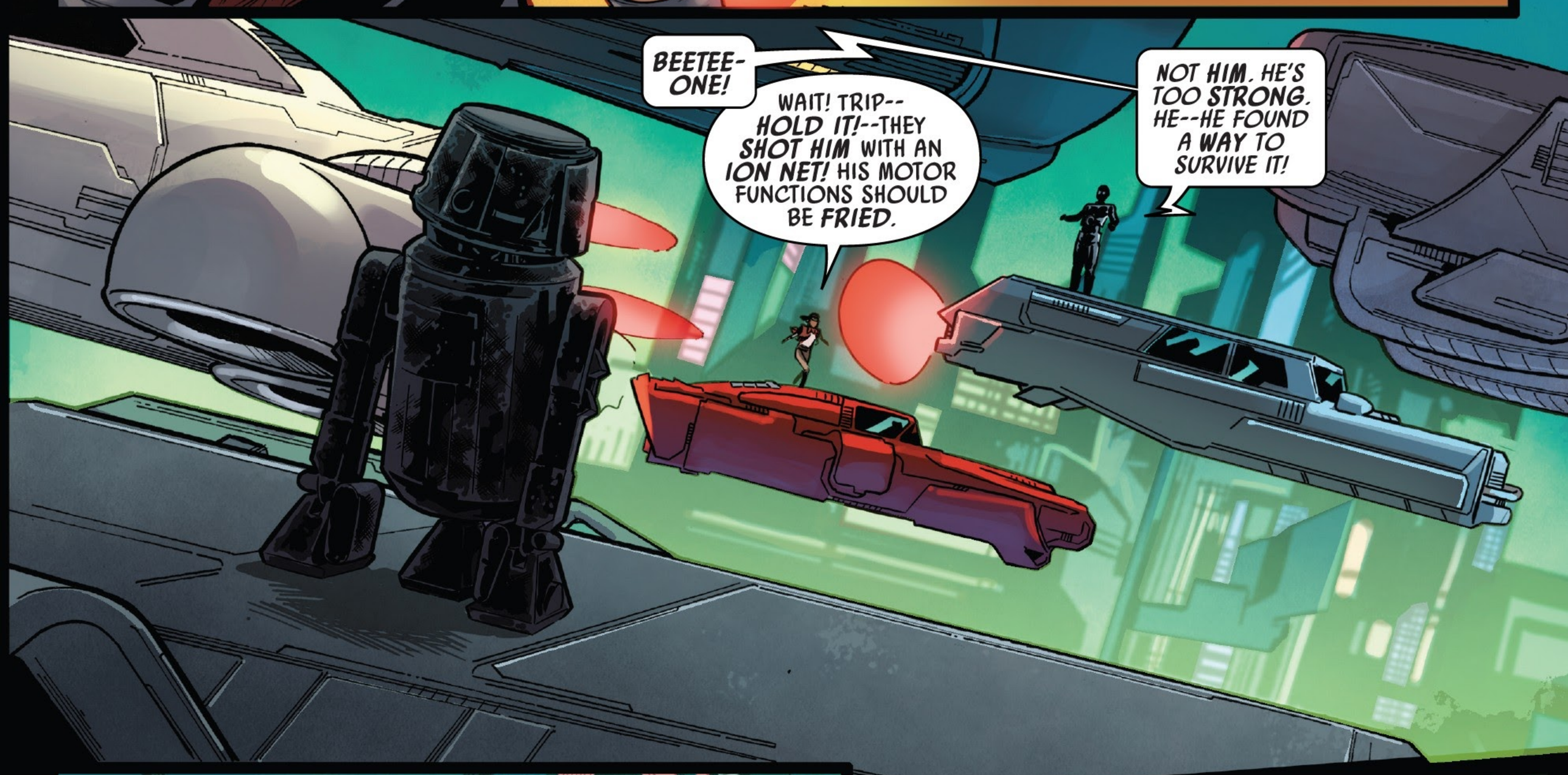
NOW WHAT D'YOU SAY WE GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE, AND-- UH...
T-TRIP--?
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
TRIP, I FIXED YOU, WHAT ARE Y--
WHR-CLK

FWOOM
KLANK
SSSSS!

THE BOUNTY HUNTERS! Y-YOU SAVED ME!
THAT SPEAR WOULD'VE TAKEN MY ARM!
NONSENSE. I SAVED MYSELF.
DOWN!
THIS FREIGHTER IS GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IF I HADN'T DRAGGED ALONG YOUR SLOSHING MEATSACK BOTH BOMBS WOULD'VE BLOWN. A PRAGMATIC CHOICE.
OH WHATEVER. YOU OWE ME FOR FIXING YOU, BECAUSE SOMEWHERE IN THAT EVIL CODING IS A SLIVER OF DECENCY.
MADAM, RETRACT THAT SLANDER IMMEDIATELY OR I SHALL PERFORATE YOUR EYELIDS.
THAT'S--AH HELL--THAT'S GONNA HAVE TO WAIT, TRIP.
ALL THE RICHES OF THE GALAXY, BUT THERE'S ONE THING THE EMPIRE'LL NEVER DEFEAT--AND IT SURE AS HELL AIN'T HOPE.
TRAFFIC.
C'MON!

SLOW DOWN! I-- I WAS BUILT FOR AGONY, NOT AGILITY!
THWIIISH
QUIT MOANING AND MOVE!
YAAAAA!
OH DEAR.
FZOT
BLEEP!


WHERE DID--?
BLEEP!
I KNOW THAT SOUND...


BEETEE-ONE!
WAIT! TRIP--HOLD IT!--THEY SHOT HIM WITH AN ION NET! HIS MOTOR FUNCTIONS SHOULD BE FRIED.
NOT HIM. HE'S TOO STRONG. HE--HE FOUND A WAY TO SURVIVE IT!

THAT TRANDOSHAN--NOKK--SHE MISSED YOU! DOESN'T THAT SEEM UNLIKELY? A-AND WHEREVER SHE IS, HER HUSBAND WINLOSS ISN'T FAR AWAY!
TRIP, I THINK IT'S A TR--
OH, BEETEE! I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T TURN ON ME!

BEETEE?

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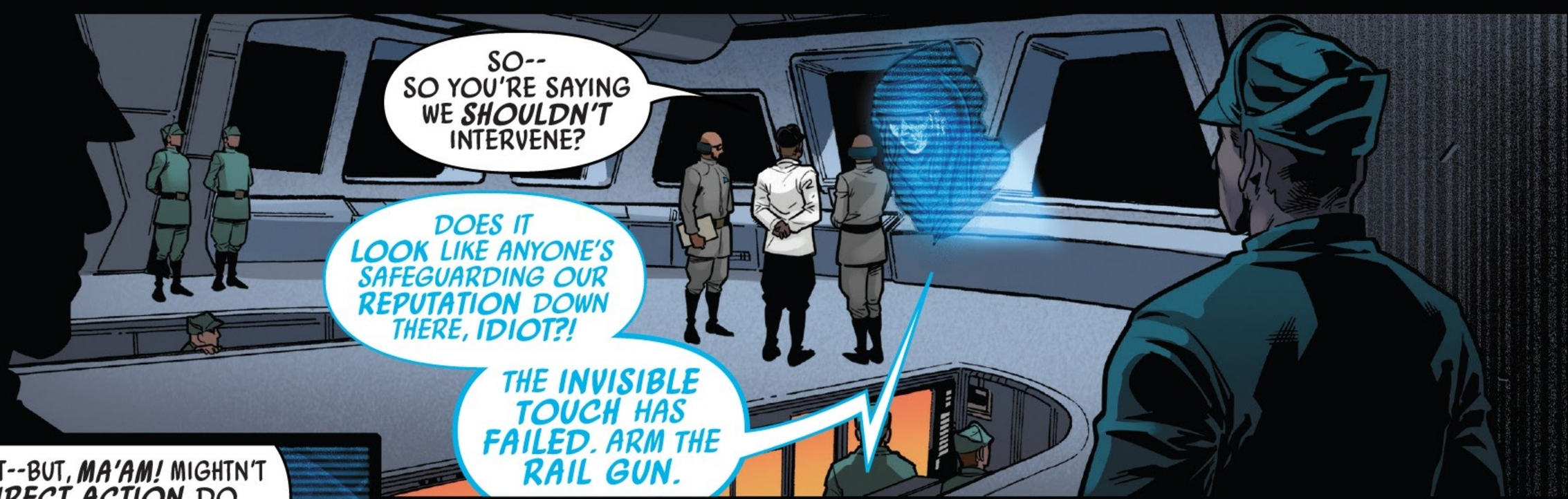
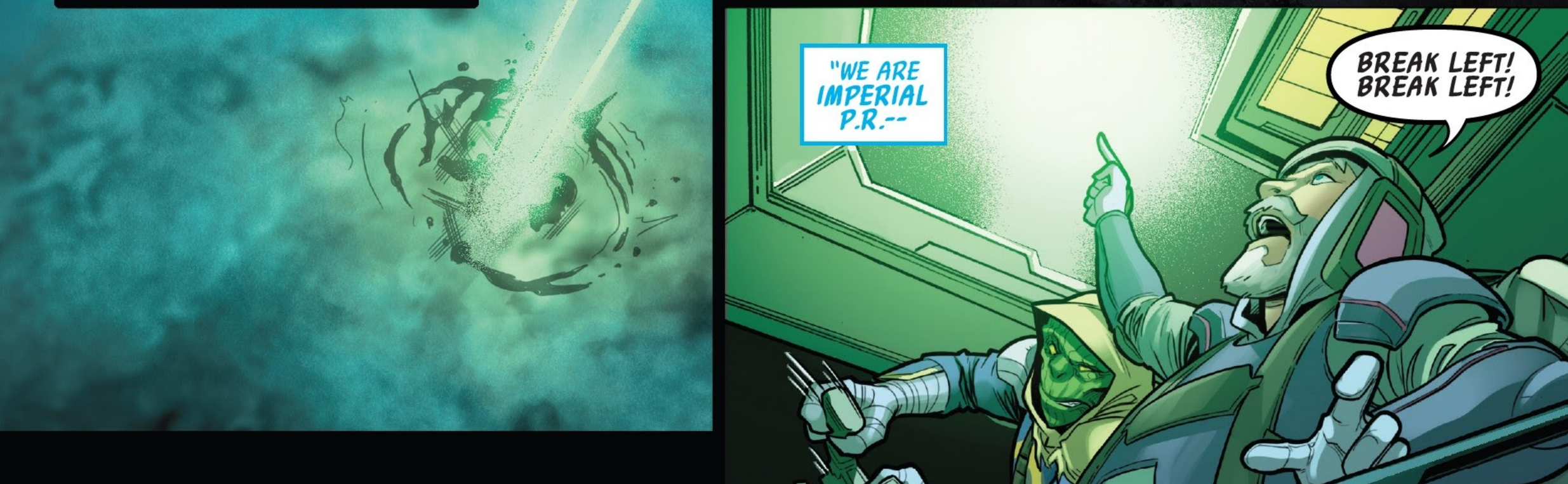
MA'AM! INCREASE IN REPORTS OF PUBLIC AGGRESSION...
THREE INCIDENTS OF CIVILIAN DISRESPECT PER MINUTE AND CLIMBING.
THE PEOPLE, THEY, UH... THEY KINDA LIKE THESE TWO ROGUES, MA'AM. THEY'RE GONNA GET ROWDY IF THIS ENDS BADLY...
=SIGH= LISTEN CAREFULLY, CAPTAIN.

ON SEVEN HUNDRED OCCUPIED WORLDS THIS DIVISION LAUDS MILVAYNE AS A MODEL IMPERIAL PLANET.
SIXTY-THREE SYSTEMS HAVE CAPITULATED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF ITS EXAMPLE RATHER THAN FACE IMPERIAL AGGRESSION.
AN INVISIBLE TOUCH. A SUPPORTIVE TOUCH. THAT'S THE OFFER.
AS LONG AS THE PROVINCIAL NOBODIES ENFORCE ORDER AND SAFEGUARD THE REPUTATION OF THE EMPIRE, WE RULE FROM AFAR.


SO-- SO YOU'RE SAYING WE SHOULDN'T INTERVENE?
DOES IT LOOK LIKE ANYONE'S SAFEGUARDING OUR REPUTATION DOWN THERE, IDIOT?!
THE INVISIBLE TOUCH HAS FAILED. ARM THE RAIL GUN.

B-BUT--BUT, MA'AM! MIGHTN'T DIRECT ACTION DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD? SURELY THE SUBTLE APPROACH--
PFT. HOW MANY TIMES, CAPTAIN?
CHOOM


"WE ARE IMPERIAL P.R.--
BREAK LEFT! BREAK LEFT!

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OH VOID... WE LOST AN ENGINE...
T-TRIP?
YES, DOCTOR?
D-DO YOU THINK PEOPLE CAN CHANGE?
AH! POINTLESS MORAL AGONIZING AT THE MOMENT OF IMPENDING DEATH. I HAVE EXTENSIVE FILES ON THIS ORGANIC BEHAVIOR.
LET'S SEE NOW...
VWUM VWUM VWUM PHUTT
NO. YOU CANNOT CHANGE. YOU ARE A FALTERING MEAT COMPUTER LACKING THE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT BLESSES THOSE OF US OF HIGHER FUNCTION.
THEY'VE-- OH NO--THEY'VE EJECTED. THE OTHER ENGINE'S FAILING...
INDEED. THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT YOU ARE IMMORAL, DOCTOR.
THE PROBLEM--THE REASON THAT YOU ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT THE SAME ERRORS UNTIL YOUR END--
--IS THAT YOU ARE A DISASTER.
OH NO OH NO OH NOOOAAAA...
AND SINCE YOU ARE ALSO A PATHETICALLY LONELY LITTLE APE, YOU DEAL WITH BOTH INADEQUACIES THE SAME WAY:

YOU DRAG EVERYONE DOWN WITH YOU.
To Be Continued?!

DOCTOR APHRA
NEXT ISSUE:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com to make it into a future letters page. Mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT." If the Force is truly strong with you—tweet us! #aphracomic and #oktoprint